

## Designing-In Crime by Designing-Out the Social? Situational Crime Prevention and the intensification of harmful subjectivities

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### Abstract

Situational crime prevention and CPTED strategies have been broadly criticised within much of theoretical criminology. Most of these criticisms dismantle the notion of the fully rational criminal actor, questioning the shaky ground of classical criminology on which its claims are made. Through positioning hyper-regulated city centres as post-social, post-political 'non-places' of consumption, this article builds upon these critiques arguing that attempts to 'design out crime' create environments which are not only doomed to fail in their primary objective, but actively create environments which perpetuate and exacerbate the decline in symbolic efficiency and the narcissistic, competitive-individualist and asocial subjectivities which, as recent work from left-wing criminology consistently reveals, have the capacity to significantly contribute to forms of harm, crime and deviance.

**Keywords:** Situational Crime Prevention; Urban Space; harm; deviance

### Introduction

The policy strategies of situational crime prevention (SCP) and their attempts to prevent crime by creating 'defensible space' (Newman, 1972) have been a major source of annoyance for much of theoretical criminology. Much-needed critiques have been levelled at these strategies, with arguments centring primarily on the shortcomings of the neo-classical rational choice and routine activity theories which underpin these measures (de Haan and Vos, 2003; Hayward, 2004; 2004b; 2007; 2012). In particular, Keith Hayward draws upon a wealth of literature across cultural criminology, social psychology and consumer and leisure studies to introduce a much more nuanced consideration of emotion, affect and the conflict between the irrationality of much crime, deviance and leisure with SCP's conceptualisation of the 'rational man' (Featherstone, 1987; Hayward and Hobbs, 2007; Katz, 1988; Lyng, 1990; Miles, 1996). While the early ideas of Jane Jacobs (1961) and her notion of 'the eyes on the street' have much merit, they have been misappropriated and ill-applied by rational-choice theories and SCP. In placing faith in a misguided conceptualisation of the dispassionate rational man, rather than the more culturally and experientially-attuned theoretical accounts of cultural criminology, it has been argued that policy initiatives such as SCP and Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED from hereon) offer false promises of their ability to control much crime and deviance.

These critiques, while extremely valuable in their own right, focus solely upon SCP's simplistic theorisation of crime, its failure to acknowledge the social, cultural and emotional complexity of criminality and thus, the flawed basis on which it attempts to sustainably prevent crime and deviance (de Haan and Vos, 2003; Hayward, 2007). However, rarely within the criminological literature has there been much consideration of what kind of 'public subjectivities' the contemporary SCP-laden environment cultivates and what importance this might have for criminological theory. This article intends to take existing critiques a step further by arguing that SCP's attempts to 'design out crime' are not only doomed to fail in their primary objective, but

actively create urban environments which perpetuate and exacerbate the competitive-individualist and asocial subjectivities which, as recent work within left-wing criminology has shown, underpins much crime and deviance ranging from sink estates to corporate boardrooms (Hall, 2012; Hall et al, 2008; Smith, 2014; Winlow and Hall, 2006; Treadwell et al, 2013).

Looking at the social and historical origins of defensible space and 'fear of the other', this article will first examine how these anxieties and fears have become exacerbated in late modernity and, in the context of global neoliberal capitalism, woven themselves into the physical fabric of both the public and private realms through SCP (Atkinson and Blandy, 2007; Hayward, 2004). The article will then go on to look at the kinds of spatial environments these measures create, and consider their impact upon how we collectively view and engage with the 'public realm' and the effects this might have more broadly upon social solidarity and symbolic efficiency. Finally, the article will turn to recent developments in ultra-realist criminological theory (Winlow and Hall, 2015) to consider the parallels between the public subjectivities that contemporary urban environments engender and some of the key social and psychoanalytical processes which this recent theoretical and empirical research suggests is vital to the motivational drive to criminality.

This article does not intend to suggest that the crime prevention strategies of SCP and the environments they create are the direct *cause* of crime. Such an argument would ludicrously ignore that crime is a multi-factorial phenomenon which, like SCP, is underpinned by much larger social, cultural and political-economic structures and forces. However, as has been argued elsewhere, criminology must begin to look at the underlying drives, subjectivities and motivations to commit crime if it is to adequately explain the expanding forms of harmful behaviours under neoliberal capitalism (Hall, 2012). Therefore, this article merely wishes to question the extent to which, far from being a solution, the strategies of SCP and CPtED actively contribute to the problem. Put simply: when we employ SCP and CPtED strategies in our city spaces, are we designing-*in* the decline of symbolic efficiency and the development of potentially harmful subjectivities by designing-*out* the social?

### **The Retreat from the Social: Contemporary and Historical Contexts**

There has been a wealth of literature about the social withdrawal from public life, where 'being in public' has involved a retreat into the self, viewing the stranger as a threat or danger rather than as a source of potential social enrichment, enjoyment or inspiration (Baumgartner, 1988; de Cauter, 2004; Sennett, 1977). Most prominently, the rich have been identified as retreating from public life, using their wealth and resources to live more exclusive and shielded lives away from the dangerous 'other' (Atkinson, 2008; Atkinson and Smith, 2012). More recent research indicates that the behaviours and movements of the rich which are supported by SCP measures allow them to simultaneously be both 'in' the city whilst also entirely disentangled from its street-level reality—spatially and culturally detached from those marred by the difficulties of neoliberal austerity and widening social inequality (Atkinson, 2008; 2015). Rowland Atkinson contends that the super-rich live in a 'plutocratic cloud' enabled by an array of security-focused 'shielded mobilities' to live 'nodally' in a network of fortified and gated enclaves of the home,

work and exclusive members' societies which consist of 'people like us', thereby avoiding unpleasant encounters with poverty and hardship (Atkinson, 2015)<sup>1</sup>.

However it is not only the super-rich who have retreated from public life in our cities. On a more mundane level, public space can often be relatively bereft of social interaction and really existing social space (Sennett, 1977). One can see this if we observe the behaviours of fellow urban-dwellers as they go about their business in the city. We move quickly through train stations and high streets, nervously zig-zagging along to avoid 'charity muggers', homeless beggars or *Big Issue* sellers. Many city councils demand that busking musicians apply for permits to perform on the street, with city council guidelines offering a list of 'do's and don'ts' in which buskers cannot perform for longer than two hours and must cease performing if a member of the public deems them a nuisance or disturbance. We plug in our iPods and close our eyes on the train to shut out the world around us, deterring any oddly invasive stranger who might penetrate our personal 'microspheres of spatial sovereignty' to start up a conversation (Sloterdijk, 2011). De Cauter (2003) has described this state of affairs in contemporary society as a 'capsular civilisation', characterised by the gated community, the blacked-out SUV and the general defensive mode of being in public—a public and implied 'Do Not Disturb' sign (de Cauter, 2003; Marvin and Graham, 2001).

The retreat from public life, taken in collaboration with these latest developments in theoretical criminology, seems to offer an unparalleled opportunity to present new critiques of SCP, the urban environments they create and their impact upon public subjectivities. As we live in urban environments which are physically and architecturally designed and governed to encourage vigilance, suspicion, and the steady flow and movement of people, these everyday micro-practices of avoidance cause social relations to become increasingly fluid, transient and anonymous, with a lack of social integration and a general interpersonal indifference among strangers (Baumgartner, 1988).

However, this retreat from, and indifference to, 'public' life is rooted in long historical processes. The public retreat which has become a popular topic for geographers, urbanists and sociologists did not begin with SCP, but has only been exacerbated by it in the contemporary context of an increasingly individualistic culture of consumer capitalism. One of Richard Sennett's seminal texts, *The Fall of Public Man* (1977), discusses the withdrawal from the social in the context of the diminishing boundary between the public and private realms. Sennett argues that an obsession with knowing oneself, experiencing authentic feeling and genuine intimacy in interpersonal relations irrespective of the realm in which it took place has skewed the balance between public and private life. As this article will observe later, this obsession with oneself and knowing oneself is arguably reflected, in contemporary times, within the individualistic identity project of consumerism which pervades and forms the economy for post-industrial UK cities.

Sennett maintains that within the intimate arena of privacy with family and friends, one does not require the same characteristics as one does from public life with strangers. Public life involves the 'wearing of masks' and interacting with one another through the performance of impersonal

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<sup>1</sup> However, as Atkinson and Smith's (2012) analysis of homicides *within* gated communities; neutralising the criminogenic dangers of the city by withdrawing into the affluence of gated communities offer no guarantees of increased safety—real or imagined.

formalities of public interaction. However the fascination with individual personalities and the belief in disclosing the self as a moral good in and of itself has superimposed the private realm onto the public. Consequently, public life was seen to be meaningless, fake and empty of authenticity. However, the confusion of the private and public realms and the superimposition of the disclosure of the authentic self and character also produced significant anxiety and distress. The individual self is considered a precious commodity to be protected delicately. But with the cultural command to be authentic—or rather to not be fake through the impersonal routines of social relations—the only protection against one's self being intruded upon by others was to stop feeling and withdraw from public and social interaction altogether:

“Silence in public became the only way one could experience public life, especially street life, without feeling overwhelmed...There grew up the notion that strangers had no right to speak to each other; that each man possessed as a public right an invisible shield, a right to be left alone. Public behaviour was a matter of observation, of passive participation” (Sennett, 1977: 27).

Consequently, through the blurring of boundaries between the public and private realm and the absorption in the self, the stranger came to be seen as a threat and a source of intrusion, anxiety and stress rather than as a source of social enrichment. This historical reorientation of public life serves as a backdrop for examining how SCP and CPTED measures design spaces so that they are deliberately absent of anything resembling actually existing public sociability, in which public space becomes empty space to move through, rather than remain in.

### **Consumer Capitalism and SCP: Creating ‘Non-Places’**

The notion of situational crime prevention, defensible space and the protection of property from danger has long historical roots. As Atkinson and Blandy (2007) point out, the right to own property and treating the home as a personal sanctuary dates back in socio-legal discourse to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with Lord Chief Justice Coke coining the now famous line that “the house of every one is to him as his castle and fortress” (ibid. 2007: 445). Changes in the political-economic landscape have, as many scholars argue, escalated a more general perception of risk and social fear (Bauman, 2007; Beck, 1992). This, along with property ownership taking on a heightened importance within the social and cultural imagination where it carries not only the use value of being a place of comfort to live, sleep and engage in the intimate privacy of family, but value as a speculative financial asset and ‘lifetime investment’, has resulted in home ownership becoming an increasingly defensive and paranoid process. The home is now more hostile and impermeable than ever, with high fences, locked gates, burglar alarm systems (both working and fake), timed lights and ‘Beware of dog’ signs becoming normal features of even the safest neighbourhoods. Indeed, Oscar Newman’s (1972) ideas of ‘defensible space’ upon which many SCP measures are based were originally directed toward changing the residential environment.

However, these defensive features of SCP have expanded beyond the domestic sphere and embedded themselves both subtly and explicitly within the public realm and into individuals’ everyday lives and movements (see Hayward, 2004: 138-139) for discussion of the overt nature of many SCP measures). Just as the increased prevalence and sophistication of defensive home ownership has roots in social and cultural processes, neither has the employment of SCP into the

physical design of urban spaces been implemented within a social, political or economic vacuum. Paradigmatic shifts in the global economy have resulted in considerable socio-economic, cultural and urban change in the United Kingdom which have significantly impacted the way in which the individual subjectively experiences and engages with social and spatial reality. The dissolution of the traditional forms of industrial employment and the steady move towards an economy predicated upon financial services, leisure and consumption over the last four decades is, for some, comparable in significance to the agricultural and industrial revolutions of previous centuries (Hobsbawm, 1976; 1996; Smith, 2014).

For cities, this involved a historic shift in municipal governance and the physical and spatial landscapes of city centres (Minton, 2012). As the new orthodoxy of neoliberal capitalism pervaded, post-industrial UK cities had to make what Winlow and Hall (2013: 124) describe as the shift from municipal socialism to municipal capitalism. This has involved local authorities fleeing from social democratic municipal governance and throwing their hopes into the bosom of the market. The governing logic dictated a need to 'regenerate' city centres as commercial spaces of consumption, leisure and business in order to make them relevant with affluent young professionals and to make these cities economically viable and competitive in a new post-industrial economic reality (Minton, 2012). This can be seen in the creation of the 'Business Improvement Districts' (BID), in which businesses in a demarcated area pay an independent limited company<sup>2</sup> a levy to fund the improvement of privately owned business in the area and to collaborate in responsibility for the area to maximise commercial interest.

In keeping with a broader neoliberal theme of individualisation and responsabilisation, SCP has been a popular measure in which the basic premise is for local authorities, individuals and businesses to pragmatically equip their spheres of spatial sovereignty with deterrents which do not offer the rational opportunistic criminal actor an 'easy target' (Clarke, 1997; Hough et al, 1980). This can take on a whole range of forms. Architects design and redesign city spaces based upon Newman's (1972) notion of 'defensible space': open, well-lit, highly visible and relatively empty spaces which aid the flow of pedestrian traffic. Property owners, businesses and developers equip these spaces with barriers, prohibitive signs, alarm systems and CCTV cameras. The police have attempted to recapture the notion of community policing, employing the public as a vigilant source of SCP by imploring them to remain vigilant and report suspicious behaviour in train stations and airports<sup>3</sup> and even carry pepper spray, extending the imperative for safety and a defensive mind-set to the individual (Ferrell et al, 2008).

The central focus of this article, of course, is to explore what impact such measures have had on our public subjectivities. Such measures have arguably had a significant influence upon the spatial 'ecology of fear' (Davis, 1998). 'Public life' has, for a long time, been considered an important aspect of progressive societies, forcing individuals to move beyond the defensive and regressive privatism of the home and cast themselves among a diverse sea of humanity. In doing so, public life encouraged us to learn and encounter social difference on an open and level plane, possibly developing socially and emotionally stimulating bonds between people and places and

<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.newcastlene1ltd.com/> for an example of a BID in Newcastle upon Tyne

<sup>3</sup> A prime example of this are the regular announcements at train platforms to 'report anything suspicious to a member of staff'. This is part of the Metropolitan Police's 'If you suspect it, report it' counter-terrorism publicity campaign <http://content.met.police.uk/Campaign/nationwidecounterterrorism>



cultivating a crucial sense of the 'social' that extended beyond the self (Sennett, 1977). As urban spaces expand and Western societies revolve increasingly around the city (Amin and Thrift, 2002) and with the increase in globalisation, migration and the ever-increasing density of urban populations, it would seem logical to assume that we have become more adept at bringing organic and dynamic social relations into the realm of public life. Many liberal scholars maintain that the city offers a vibrant and rich spatial arena of social relations. Recently, Elijah Anderson (2011) has argued that even in highly unequal and spatially segregated societies, the city is a dynamic plane which enables mutual tolerance, trust and social relationships which cross class, ethnic and cultural boundaries to form a 'cosmopolitan canopy'. However, is it an accurate reflection of reality to conflate physical proximity and diversity with an organic and dynamic actually existing social space and public subjectivities which welcome the indeterminacy and spontaneity that comes with it?

Many of the central sites within city centres are far from organic places which embrace the spontaneity of social action. They are artificial environments, carefully constructed, governed and maintained in such a way that they seem to have escaped the social (Augé, 2008). The shopping mall—perhaps the quintessential landmark of late modernity—is a sterile and homogenised environment which is carefully maintained and governed in such a way that does not embrace the organic natural texture of public life, but resists and corrals it. Security guards and CCTV systems ensure that 'social' behaviour is not spontaneous, exciting and free to be individually directed, but follows the predictable pattern of orderly consumption, precisely so that any disturbances to the contrary become immediately visible and noteworthy. The use of homeless spikes ensures that even the profile of *who* enters urban spaces is not organic (Quinn, 2014). Those without the financial means or intent to consume will inevitably detract from the homogenised purposeful behaviour (Quinn, 2014). There has been a decline of public benches or even bins which would give one cause to stop; driving one small activist group in the Camden Borough of London to undertake 'guerrilla benching', re-installing their own outdoor benches in the spaces where they had previously been removed<sup>4</sup>. As Mike Davis first observed in *City of Quartz* in (1990), even where benches or public seating do appear in shopping malls, bus-stops and train stations, they have been deliberately designed with arm-rests and narrow sloping seats to deter young people, the homeless or general loiterers from staying there for any prolonged time-period (Davis, 1990; Ferrell et al, 2008). Even when these spaces attempt to inject some dynamism through musical performances or artists, they are not impromptu performers but carefully screened, documented and given strict guidelines to follow, where buskers can require permits and auditions to play (Ferrell, 2001; Minton, 2012). The urban soundscape is being used to drive away undesirable individuals by using high-pitched noise to disperse young people (Goodman, 2010; Hayward, 2012).

In this way, many public spaces reflect a degree of 'hyperreality' (Baudrillard, 1994), sharing more in common with the carefully orchestrated realm of Disneyland than a natural and organic public space (Shearing and Stenning, 1985). Plants are not really plants; the barrels of beer in a themed pub whose atmosphere and décor are carefully constructed are not barrels but cardboard replicas. Even the open courtyard or piazza to an apartment complex, while appearing

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.spacehijackers.org/html/projects/guerrillabench/guerrilla.html>

in form to be a public square for social activity, is actually only a 'pedestrian traffic nexus' (Sennett, 1977). The apartment complex in which I live has such a courtyard, with the building tenants' committee constantly asking management to tighten security on the square to prevent people loitering, all justified under the vague banner of tackling 'anti-social behaviour' and protecting property prices (see Harvey, 2014). The 'original' of public social life has been copied and modified repetitively over time to such an extent that it has lost or forgotten how it is supposed to resemble the original reality.

These spaces are, effectively, what Marc Augé (2008) terms 'non-places', physical spaces of transience bereft of social interaction to the extent that they do not possess enough significance to be considered 'places' at all. Augé (2008: 77-78) uses examples of motorways, airports, train stations, supermarkets and retail parks:

"If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space that cannot be defined as relational, historical or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places: instead these are listed, classified, promoted to the status of 'places of memory', and assigned to a circumscribed and specific position".

Many of our open public spaces lack this kind of character or meaning, being a very real physical space which we occupy and move through whilst having very little content or possible meaning to give it any quality of 'place'. Immediately near the entrance to Newcastle Central railway station there is a vast open concrete space which is well-lit, spacious, highly visible and completely empty. It is encircled by the railway station, the underground metro, a bus stop, a taxi rank, several bars and a Starbucks; merely an 'adjoining space' within the flowing network of urban mobilities ready to take one from home to work or leisure (Graham and Marvin, 2001; Blokland and Savage, 2008). In this brief 'negative space' between the realms of work, private interpersonal activity of socialising with close friends in pubs or coffeehouses, there is nothing which would prompt one to stop. Smokers occasionally stop idly in this space, striking up a conversation with fellow smokers, but even this has become more hazardous with the removal of cigarette bins and the posting of a city council officer ready to issue a £75 on-the-spot fine for anyone dropping cigarette butts. As guided by the directions of Newman (1972) and expanded upon in the 'broken windows' theory of crime, the image of the space is more important than its content.

This is of course by design, underpinned by the logic of SCP. These spaces have become, to use Richard Sennett's terminology, "derivatives of movement" (Sennett, 1977: 14) in which the purpose is to pass through, rather than remain in public space. This certainly satisfies one of Oscar Newman's five key elements of defensible space: well-lit, highly visible *adjoining areas* which can take one safely from one place to the next (Newman, 1972). Of course, to achieve this, these spaces have to be designed in such a way as to be unremarkable, containing such emptiness and minimalism that they cannot carry any meaning at all. They cannot be enjoyed as spaces in and of themselves in the way a beautiful public park could be enjoyed. We can see this in the decline of council funding for public parks and benches which, as Sennett (1977) notes, is a reversal of the original project to build urban parks in the 18<sup>th</sup> century metropolis. During this

era, as public life was becoming increasingly diverse and the forum through which strangers could meet, going for a pedestrian stroll became a form of relaxation and pleasure. However, with changes in the political economy organising the city and leisure through the individualistic activities of the consumer market, 'being in public' has come to hold little social or cultural value, with strolling as a form of relaxation being moved out of the urban and toward the countryside and rural areas as tourist pursuits (Harvey, 2012). The public realm, where we must grit our teeth and mix with the potential 'other', is a dangerous, meaningless place which we must hurry through on to our next personal activity before any suspicious stranger penetrates 'bubble' of personal space (Sloterdijk, 2011).

This is not to say that contemporary urban spaces are completely empty of people who linger within the public sphere. As referred to earlier, smokers linger in public space but such lingering is restricted by both time and space. The lingering smoker is, increasingly, packed into demarcated 'smoking zones', denoted either by a small painted area or a shelter resembling a bus stop. But smokers' lingering is also limited to the duration of a cigarette, with purposeless lingering seen as a nuisance to the flow of people (Hayward, 2004). Another example of people lingering is those seen sitting and standing outside of pubs, bars and café's in consumer cities. Indeed, neoliberalism can actively encourage lingering, but a specific form of purposeful lingering that is only acceptable when in conjunction with consumption. This level of lingering and sociability is simply another example of an opportunity for narcissistic and competitive individualistic forms of sociability which often involve an opportunity to ostentatiously display cultural competence by sipping the right kind of alcoholic cocktail or coffee, wearing the right clothes or carrying the right shopping bags and attempting to stimulate envy in others to elevate the self, a form of egoism which has been shown to be a constituent part of the wider subjective driving motivation to harm others (Hall et al, 2008; Raymen and Smith, 2015; Smith, 2014). While public space may be full of people, such co-presence is a far cry from a selfless investment in performing the social in a way which carries lasting, collective and communal qualities of love, politics and urban solidarity. This involves an embracing of the potential for unexpected and unscripted social engagement which is the exact opposite of the atonality we can currently observe (Badiou, 2013; Sennett, 1970).

Within this limited framework of 'lingering', it is difficult to conceive how urban citizens might recapture Lefebvre's concept of 'the right to the city' (1991); if indeed, as David Harvey (2012) questions, such a right still exists. Lefebvre's original conceptualisation of the right to the city in 1968 has been used, re-used and distorted so much that it often fails to resemble its original meaning. The right to the city, as certain scholars recall, is not merely a right to access services or individualistic interests. It is a much broader concept which involves the right to change ourselves and our society by changing the city and by changing the processes of urbanisation (Harvey, 2008; 2012; Marcuse, 2009). As David Harvey (2012) remarks, the right to the city is an "empty signifier". The right to the city is defined only by who gets to fill it with meaning who controls how the urban and, consequently in a world increasingly revolving around the urban, society more generally operates. As Marcuse (2009: 193) writes:



“The homeless person in Los Angeles has not won the right to the city when he is allowed to sleep on a park bench in the centre. Much more is involved, and the concept is as to a collectivity of rights, not individualistic rights.”

Consequently, urban movements such as guerrilla benching, urban exploration (Garrett, 2013) or parkour are not enacting ‘the right to the city’ (in the Lefebvrian sense) by attempting to ‘reclaim public space’; nor are the drinkers, smokers, shoppers or coffee drinkers mentioned above who linger in the public realm. All of these practices either fail to explicitly challenge capitalist financiers and developers hegemony over the city, or actively participate in perpetuating such hegemony. All of these practices involve a retreat into the individualistic interests of the self—be they consumption-based or otherwise—without creating communal social spaces based upon a collective sense of sociability which is concerned with challenging neoliberal capitalism’s ubiquitous control over the process of urbanisation, how the city is shaped and how we interact and relate to one another (Harvey, 2012).

### **Developing Moral Minimalism**

This changing nature of the public realm runs parallel to Keith Hayward’s argument that there has been a ‘semiotic disambiguation between place and function’ (Hayward, 2004: 140). Urban spaces are designed and governed to remove any sense of spatial ambiguity and, in the words of de Jong and Schuilenberg (2006) ‘keep space to its specificity’, in which space comes to have no meaning beyond its function. It is to achieve, at the street-level of ‘lived space’, the city as it was imagined by urban planners, landowners and architects; what Lefebvre (1991) would have termed the ‘representation of space’ or de Certeau (1984) would call ‘the concept city’, as discussed below by Hayward (2012) and Sennett (1970):

“Like a neutered, passive (spatially inverted) version of Kettling, these safe zones adopt an at-a-distance approach that not only results in the homogenization of the individual and the banishment of spontaneity or resistance from the demarcated space, but, like Kettles, they also provoke questions about the derealisation of rights and citizenship via the creation of a ‘suspended zone’. This is ultimately the cost of a future made certain” (Hayward, 2012: 454).

“Over and over again one can hear in planning circles a fear expressed when the human beings affected by planning changes become even slightly interested in the remedies propose for their lives. “Interference,” “blocking,” an “interruption of work”—these are the terms by which social challenges or divergences from the planners’ projections are interpreted. What has really happened is that the planners have wanted to take the plan, the projection in advance, as more “true” than the historical turns, the unforeseen movements in the real time of human lives” (Sennett, 1970: 7).

As Hayward and Sennett point out, street-level human interaction rarely appears in the maps and models of the urban planner's imagined 'concept city'. Moreover, with human interaction in its organic form rarely being as orderly and predictable as would be desirable in the 'concept city', these spaces are characterised by subtle forms of aggression, power and threat through an array of SCP measures buttressed by financial and legal authoritative punishments. The function of these sublimated forms of aggression and power is not to be covert, but extremely *overt*, a steady hum of the spatial prohibitions and threats which blend into the space through signs, CCTV cameras, physical barriers of wire-topped fences or gates and security guards the body cameras they often now wear. As Keith Hayward (2004) argues, to describe these spaces as exclusionary would be to misunderstand how one governs the behaviour of a mass of subjects through space: "For surveillance to manage its wayward subjects, to mould shape and ultimately ensure conformity of conduct, those subjects must be *inside* the perimeter not *outside*" (Hayward, 2004: 139). Such spaces operate by its subjects being constantly aware of a looming surveillance presence.

However, such visibility and overt surveillance results in a paradox. While heightened visibility and transparency would appear to provide the basis for an open public forum of safe social engagement; research suggests that increased visibility actually *decreases* sociability (Drucker and Gumpert, 1991). Sennett uses the example of open-plan office floors, in which the walls and barriers to visibility within offices were torn down to increase bureaucratic efficiency. The idea is that, by visually exposing everyone to one another, people are less likely to gossip, chat or socialise and instead opt to keep to themselves. As Sennett (1977: 15) writes: "When everyone has each other under surveillance, sociability decreases, silence being the only form of protection". Similar methods have historically been used in prisons—most famously in Jeremy Bentham's panopticon—in order to successfully manage subjects through their self-regulation and governance without using force. (Božovič, 1995; Foucault, 1975). Moreover, when compounded with the new culture of narcissism which characterises, drives and is shaped by an ever-quickenning consumer culture, the individual subject *solicits* the social retreat, finding more immediate gratification in the knowing of oneself rather than the knowing of others. Any system as successful as consumer capitalism has been in urban spaces is dependent upon an active solicitation and general acceptance of these spatial environments, rather than such controlling environments being predicated exclusively upon totalitarian control (Hall, 2012b). People accept such measures under the guise of 'national security', 'protecting the public' (protecting the public from the public?) and controlling anti-social behaviour, while also accepting them due to how their spatial character enables smooth and efficient consumption with very little chance of an unsolicited human encounter. The result is a situation that is similar to the words of Alexis de Tocqueville:

"Each person, withdrawn into himself, behaves as though he is a stranger to the destiny of all the others. His children and his good friends constitute for him the whole of the human species. As for his transactions with his fellow citizens, he may mix among them, but he sees them not; he touches them, but does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms there remains in his mind a sense of family, there no longer remains a sense of society" (Tocqueville, cited in Sennett, 1977: i).

These conditions arguably create what Baumgartner (1988) describes as ‘moral minimalism’, in which the individual is oriented around the avoidance of interaction or confrontation with others, adopting an averse position to the policing of one another through modes of formal and informal social control. In the moral minimalist order, there is little recourse to action based upon a higher plane of ideological or moral principles. The moral minimalist is exactly what it sounds like—the general renouncement of morally ideological principles in the policing of both the self and others; preferring to practice the careful and sophisticated avoidance of all problems unless they directly impact the self, individualising the moral order (Baumgartner, 1988). Baumgartner contends that moral minimalism is produced and maintained by a pronounced fluidity in social relations, a lack of collective social integration and a general sense of indifference among one another. As she succinctly puts it: “it appears that moral minimalism is most extensive where social interaction is most diffuse...loose and fluid social interaction makes avoidance a simple matter: it is easy to end a relationship that hardly exists” (Baumgartner, 1988: 12-13).

Arguably, Baumgartner’s description of moral minimalism and its underpinning social conditions reflect what is currently happening within the post-social non-places of the late modern public realm. It is not unreasonable to make the claim that, in general, we endure public life with the desire for unimpeded isolation and solitude from unexpected and uninvited social interaction from strangers. When boarding a train or a bus, we invariably opt to choose a pair of seats in which we can be alone, reluctantly accepting an unknown neighbour when the train is busy, even opting to stand in solitude if the journey is short. We smile and engage in the routinized but empty engagements with the supermarket cashier, but the charade of sociability is fleeting, fluid and without depth. In this way, Winlow and Hall (2013) argue that the late modern subject attempts to achieve full sovereignty over her immediate environment, exercising the most basic form of *special liberty* in which we have the freedom to commute in the peace of our own company. While Hall (2012) predominantly uses the term to describe the sense of privilege enjoyed by self-proclaimed ‘wealth creators’ to enact their desires, however harmful to others, with minimal restraint or opposition, it seems reasonable to suggest that it is equally pervasive throughout society. Our withdrawal into our books, phones and laptops in public is a scaled-down mirroring of the choices of the wealthy to withdraw behind the fortified walls of the gated community or rise above the realities of street-level to the luxury penthouse (Atkinson, 2008). As JG Ballard writes:

“The notion of the community as a voluntary association of enlightened citizens has died for ever...Today we scarcely know our neighbours, shun most forms of civic involvement and happily leave the running of society to a caste of political technicians. People find all the togetherness they need in the airport boarding lounge and the department-store lift. They pay lip service to community values but prefer to live alone” (Ballard, 2000: 263).

Baumgartner uses the notion of ‘moral minimalism’ to explain how the ‘moral order of the suburb’ avoids conflict (Baumgartner, 1988). However, this article takes a different view. Recent theoretical developments in *ultra-realist* criminology argue that it is this type of moral minimalism, individualism and broader culture of narcissism which destroys a collective belief in a socio-symbolic order and underpins the harmful subjectivities which are at the driving heart of

crime and deviance (Hall, 2012; Hall et al, 2008; Reiner, 2007). To briefly clarify, ultra-realism is a theoretical position builds upon and moves beyond a left realist Mertonian position and draws upon Žižek's transcendental materialism to offer a more comprehensive conceptualisation of harmful subjectivities and the tensions between psychosocial drives and cultural-economic conditions in liberal-capitalism (Winlow and Hall, 2015). Over the past four decades, the development of individualistic, self-interested and potentially harmful subjectivities have been heavily influenced and nurtured by the cultural and global political-economic shifts of neoliberal consumer capitalism which, in full agreement with free-market ideology, have crushed collectivism and social solidarity and in its place cultivated a culture of *competitive individualism* front-and-centre of the new social order (Hall, 2012; Smith, 2014). It is to a summary of these ideas that we must turn in order to draw parallels between the post-social individualistic environments created by SCP and the harmful subjectivities engendered by late modern liberal capitalism.

### **Competitive Individualism and the Death of the Symbolic Order**

The 1980s witnessed a historical shift in the global political economy which has had profound and lasting impacts on post-industrial society, culture and everyday life. Global capitalism and neoliberal policies' evisceration of traditional forms of industrial employment, identity and social and community collectivism has radically reoriented the late modern subject (Lloyd, 2013; Winlow and Hall, 2006). It is widely accepted that the traditional sites of industrial employment offered a great deal of stability and comprehensibility of reproductive working-class structures and cultures (Hobsbawm, 1996, Willis, 1977). Moreover, without romanticising these industries, there is evidence to suggest that individuals derived solidarity, mutual understanding, political and class identity from them as well (Willis, 1979). However, in the wake neo-liberalism's post-industrial disciplining and flexibilisation of labour (Lloyd, 2013), the traditional life structures which have provided identity, stability and certainty—such as family, committed relationships, stable employment and collective politics—have been dismantled and discarded. As Western society has shifted away from industrial production and towards an economy entirely predicated on consumption, consumer capitalism has increasingly prompted a renunciation of any governing ideology, code, rules traditions or customs which might impede its functional necessity to constantly create new markets<sup>5</sup>.

These shifts result in a paradox: Whilst we appear to live in a world of endless rules and protocols; there is no governing Symbolic Order which provides a coherent set of morally or ideologically-guided prohibitions, customs and approvals through which our individual subjectivities can come into being and act in reference to the collective (Winlow and Hall, 2012; see glossary in Winlow and Hall, 2013). The liberal-postmodern renunciation of any governing ideology, codes, rules or traditions, has led to a deep cynicism and scepticism to any forms of collective identity. The rules, codes, traditions and identities of family, class, community or even relationships are viewed as burdensome and oppressive weights upon the unique individuality

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<sup>5</sup> The liberalisation of violence within video games; the de-regulation of the night-time economy and its associated 'moral bankruptcy' and criminality (Hobbs et al, 2003) and changes in the now acceptable but once prohibited realms of gambling are all examples of this (Banks, 2013).

inside us all. However, set 'free' from the constraints of governing ideology, we have also been untethered from any sense of fixity, stability or a means of making coherent sense of our world. In the absence of any 'base', with only ourselves to rely upon and living within the increasingly competitive and ruthless world of liberal-capitalism, Steve Hall (2012) argues that such conditions have resulted in the development of harmful subjectivities which have, to a large degree, rejected social solidarity in favour of a competitive individualism which is willing to harm others to further the benefits of the self; mirroring, rather than differentiating from, the cultural values of neoliberalism (Hall, 2012: 245). This is not to make a moralistic comment but to sketch out how changes in the political, economic and ideological landscape of post-industrial society have influenced the late modern subject.

The rejection of the social and the retreat into individualism and one's individual desires results in the death of a Symbolic Order which provides the balance between restraint and desire. The formal law forms part of this symbolic order, but the symbolic order also requires a degree of *social* agreement and a desire to act in reference to the social collective above the interests of the self in order to develop the informal rules and 'laws' which frame harmonious social interaction (Lacan, 1997; Winlow and Hall, 2013). As the wider postmodernist individualism which is, to some small extent, cultivated by the physical and cultural design of 'public' life continues to pervade; it also provides a challenge to the myth of the symbolic order. As Winlow and Hall (2013) note, the symbolic order of rules, traditions and customs do not truly *exist*. There are no physical or tangible bonds holding it in place, rather we would only *act* as if it exists. The continued existence of a shared socio-symbolic life can only exist for as long as we behave and interact in such a way that reproduces and reaffirms its imagined reality. The increasing development of individualistic subjectivities in all spheres of social, cultural and political life—including public life—involves a rejection of the social and the renunciation of the legitimacy of governing rules and ideologies; resulting a decline in the efficiency of the symbolic order.

The decline of the symbolic order and symbolic efficiency is significant. We can see the dark side of this competitive individualism in what a colleague and I have termed elsewhere as the 'violent shopping' of Black Friday sales (Raymen and Smith, 2015). In the context of this event of hyper-competitive consumption, any notions of civility, turn-taking, or queuing often go out the window. The acquisition, possession and conspicuous display of consumer goods and identity markers is supposed to position the individual as a winner compared to the losers without the items. As society has become more individualistic and organised around a consumer society, all that is left is what Žižek (2002) describes as the 'cultural injunction to enjoy', where life is about the pursuit of pleasure, a pursuit to which almost all other rules, codes, ethics or morality is secondary. The queue is important. It is emblematic of a larger symbolic order in which the desires of the self are secondary to the interests and civility of the collective. By rejecting the prosocial, individuals are acting in the belief that within a Randian context of wealth creation, individual drives and desires are prioritised, while the need to acknowledge the harms inflicted upon others is diminished. Ironically, this behaviour also occurs within the non-places of the late modern shopping mall, superstores and high streets.

This is a perspective that is gaining increasing traction within left-wing criminology. Reiner (2007) for example, locates egoism, the Randian doctrine that individuals should unflinchingly do



whatever is in their own self-interest, at the centre of neoliberal consumer culture. He cites Thatcher's edict that people should 'look to themselves first', as the driving force of an individualistic society. Steve Hall and other colleagues develop this notion further, suggesting that the form of egoism that drives the kind of harmful, criminal and deviant behaviours that occur on both sink estates and in board rooms are indeed 'deviant', but in their cultural values are shaped by and reflect the central tenets of neoliberalism: hyper-competitiveness, individualism and a particular egoism which entails elevating the self by degrading others (Hall, 2012; Hall et al, 2008; Smith, 2014; Winlow and Hall, 2006; Treadwell et al, 2013).

All of this is to problematize and draw attention to the parallels between the self-interested competitive individualism which underpins crime and deviance and the moral minimalism and withdrawal from the social which is created by environments densely smattered with SCP and CPtED measures. We can see this in what de Cauter (2004) refers to as 'capsular civilisation': an atomised society of individuals who have retreated into a vast array of private capsules—both physically real and symbolic. For de Cauter (2004), following Sennett, public life has been reduced to moving from one private enclave to another, with the automobile being the foremost example of the private 'capsule'. As the purchase of a vast array of personal and home protection products and methods for 'shielded mobilities' become increasingly democratised through the relative availability of cheap credit and the doxic commitment to lower-prices (Harvey, 2007), increasing numbers of people have the autonomy to be in more control and more selective about their public encounters and how they experience public life (Atkinson, 2006).

A significant counter-argument to the central premise of this article is the alleged 'crime decline' in recent years. If urban spaces are indeed becoming increasingly 'asocial' and aiding in the cultivation of subjectivities which are willing to inflict harm on others in order to advance the interests of the self (Hall, 2012), then why is crime, at least statistically, supposedly on the decline? Firstly, the validity of this supposed crime decline has been vociferously contested by some (Kotze and Temple, 2014), with others looking at the unequal social and spatial differentiation of the crime decline (Parker, 2008). Street crime is often most densely concentrated in impoverished locales in which various forms of crimes and its attendant shadow economy are viewed by many as victimless, economically beneficial and indeed normalised, therefore rarely appearing in the official statistics of crime surveys (Contreras, 2013; Winlow, 2001); particularly as these forms of crime have become more sophisticated and mutating to become less detectable (Hall and Winlow, 2015). The International Crime Victims Survey looks only at 11 types of 'conventional crime' and, according to Kotze and Temple (2014) doesn't always manage to penetrate high crime areas, in addition to struggling with the traditional challenge of uncovering the harmful practices involved with the white-collar realm of the finance and business industries (Horsley, 2015).

Moreover, as Jock Young (2004) has warned, statistically-based evaluations of the landscape of crime and deviance fail to acknowledge the deeply socially constructed nature of legally-defined crime. Contemporary criminology has struggled to keep up with the rapidly changing zemiological field of harms which are becoming more pervasive and increasingly normalised in everyday life, such as the harmful behaviours of the night-time economy, for one example. In studying the violence associated with Black Friday shopping, a colleague and I witnessed several

exchanges of undeniably criminal violence, none of which was deemed serious enough—or perhaps *abnormal enough*—to constitute arrest in the inherently individualistic and harmful realm of time-bound competitive consumption (Raymen and Smith, 2015). There is no evidence to suggest that the statistical decline in crime is indicative of an improvement in social relations between persons, or a change in the subjective motivation to crime rooted in competitive individualism. Rather, as Hall (2014: 24) suggests, it is more indicative of a harmful culture working in harmony with the economy.

## Conclusion

Keith Hayward's critique of situational crime prevention focuses upon how rational choice theories of crime upon which SCP is based fail to incorporate emotion, excitement and the 'culture of now' which is so pervasive in late modern consumer society (Hayward, 2004; 2007; 2012). Hayward focuses upon how, in a consumer culture that needs to create new markets for consumption in order to reproduce itself, there has been a 'deregulation of desire' in late modernity which is significantly reconfiguring the balance between hedonism and restraint and changing the late modern subject's need for constant and new forms of stimulation. This draws on Bauman, who describes this late modern subject as a 'sensation-gatherer' who is individualistic, competitive, narcissistic and self-interested (Bauman, 1997).

However, what Hayward's critique did not acknowledge was how the SCP-laden spaces of contemporary city centres are environments which potentially cultivate the individualistic, self-interested subjectivity of the 'sensation gatherer' who, tilted towards personal desire over restraint, is willing to harm others to benefit the self. The non-places of SCP and CPtED environments actively discourage pro-social public engagement, being spaces of movement which are designed to move the individual on to the next individualistic consumer activity—unsurprising considering that SCP is used to protect and govern privately owned consumer spaces. This article has modestly attempted to sketch out the contradictions within SCP-governed spaces, problematizing how environments designed and governed by CPtED and SCP are counter-productive in their nature: aiming to prevent crime while designing post-social non-places which perpetuate the asocial, individualistic subjectivities.

De Cauter (2003) writes that "[o]ur daily life can be exactly described as a movement from one enclave or capsule (home for instance) to another (campus, office, airport, all-in hotel, mall and so on)...neoliberal individualism plus suburbanization of daily life equals capsularization" (De Cauter, 2003: 96). What de Cauter touches on in his mention of neoliberal individualism is central to the arguments of this article. While this form of moving throughout urban space can be thought of as a cessation from the social, in many ways it mirrors the dominant neoliberalisation of everyday life—a microcosm of neoliberal ideology at the level of the individual. While SCP and CPtED are in many ways employed by, and caught within, the proliferation of neoliberal ideology and privatisation of public life, it is this political-economic ideology and its effects on individual subjectivities which are a significant part of the contemporary crime problem.

Situational crime prevention and the individual retreat from public life is a broad topic which this article has applied in a fairly specific way. The point of this article has not been to vilify the ideas and goals of situational crime prevention and defensible spaces. Of course, situational crime

prevention is not *the* definitive cause of the socially, politically and culturally-inspired subjective drives which underpin crime and deviance. The ideas of Newman (1972) have some merit. Indeed, it is often argued that the concept of defensible space is merely an extension of Jane Jacobs' (1961) concept of 'the eyes on the street', in which more people on the street with different backgrounds, interacting with and watching over one another would result in increased safety and sociability as a working-living space. This idea has great merit and is the exact opposite of the post-social neoliberal cities discussed here. However, these fine ideas have been employed by the privatised consumer city based upon individualistic interests of accumulating capital and overly simplistic assumptions crime and criminogenic subjectivities. This results in a securitisation of the city which serves the purposes of capital accumulation rather than communal sociability in the public realm, reproducing and perpetuating a broader neoliberal culture of individualism. While this article is far from the last word on the issue, it is hoped that it prompts more critical accounts as to whether SCP and the cities it shapes, far from being a solution, are actively part of the broader crime problem.

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